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FALSE IMPRESSIONS BECLOUD AMERICAN ATTITUDE TOWARD FRANCE

PARIS.—Developments in France since the collapse of June 1940 have been so obscured for Americans by doubts, inadequate information, prejudices, and conflicts among French groups in the United States during the war years that it is peculiarly difficult to give the American public an objective picture of what the French think, want and fear. Perhaps the most satisfactory way of describing the situation in France is to discuss certain misconceptions that have arisen in the United States. Among the most important of these misconceptions are the following:

1. *That "the French did not really mind the German occupation; the Germans were 'correct'; from the material point of view, things were better then than now, and life was quite tolerable."*

Many Americans on a visit to France get this impression because they spend most of their time in a small circle of what the French call the *haute bourgeoisie*, who in the past could afford to travel to the United States, who know English, and who entertained the Germans during the occupation with the same alacrity and the same lack of conviction with which they now entertain Americans. These Frenchmen feared movements to improve the lot of industrial workers in 1936, regarding them as forerunners of communism, and welcomed the Germans as a bulwark against further demands from labor. Their behavior, and that of some members of the higher clergy, is described by the French as *pas chic*. They are discredited in France, are not representative of majority opinion in the country, and give visiting Americans—most of whom lack knowledge both of the language and the pre-war situation of France—a false picture of France's wartime experience. It is nothing short of tragic that Americans nurtured in the tradition of Jefferson and Lincoln should so often, when they go abroad, spend their time and seek their

sources of information among reactionary groups.

2. *That "the French did not suffer much during the war years, certainly less than the population of other countries occupied by the Germans."*

Visitors to Paris gain this impression because the incomparable beauty of the city has been scarcely touched by the war and, after years of absence, seems more glorious and moving than ever. But this beauty is a brave façade for indescribable misery and anxiety, suffered by most of the people in relative silence because the French, who have a strong sense of personal dignity, have been reluctant to shout their sorrows from the housetops and have acquired, during years when the resistance movement had to work underground, a reticence they themselves compare to that of the British. The fact that during the early months of the occupation the Germans tried to be what they called "correct," and that many French men and women—stupefied by the suddenness and magnitude of their country's collapse and willing to believe in the integrity of Pétain—did not begin to resist both the Germans and Vichy until much later, misled Americans into believing that the French received relatively good treatment from Hitler. Actually, the Germans in France, as elsewhere, proceeded systematically to destroy the foundations of the nation by hounding political and intellectual leaders, by enforcing the separation of families through deportations and transfers of French workers to Germany, and by gradual reduction of the French standard of living to a point where the entire population found itself condemned to malnutrition. When the Germans now complain because they must live on rations providing 1500 calories daily, it is well for us to remember that the Germans forced the French to live on rations which during some periods dropped below 1,000 calories; and that even now French

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rations hover around 1500. The results of prolonged malnutrition are becoming apparent in a rapidly rising rate of infant mortality, tuberculosis, rickets and general debilitation of the population, in addition to the sufferings inflicted by the Germans on the French in terms of mental and physical cruelty. The Germans systematically disorganized and looted French industry to such an extent that the revival of industrial production will require thoroughgoing re-equipment of the country's principal enterprises. This will have to be done, in the first instance, largely through imports from other countries—especially the United States—and through such reparations in kind as France may find it possible to collect from Germany.

3. *That "most of the persons deported by the Germans were Jews, and workers drafted for work in Germany were only too glad to go because they were paid high wages."*

Some Americans visiting France have been unconsciously so affected by Nazi propaganda as to take the view that the deportation of Jews is in some way less harrowing or less reprehensible than that of non-Jews. This is in itself a sad commentary on the mentality we have developed during the war years, and on the efficacy of Nazi propaganda. But the impression that most of the persons deported by the Germans were Jews is in itself false because the Germans sent many non-Jews, active in the resistance movement or openly opposed to collaboration with the Nazis, to the most notorious concentration camps in Germany and subjected them to treatment that defies the imagination. Only a handful of political and "racial" deportees—whose total number is estimated at 600,000—had sufficient stamina to survive the agonies of deportation and to return, usually in tragically enfeebled condition. Those who stood up best under the strain were the Communists and the fervent believers, whatever their faith, because they could take refuge in their inner life from the attempts of the Germans, through physical and mental torture, to force the total annihilation of human values. The ones who did return burn with an inner flame of faith in the immutable preciousness of human liberty that can only make those of us who did not undergo similar experiences humble in the face of true greatness. If we, who suffered relatively so little and had so few cruel moral decisions to make, fail to give our moral support to these French men and women, and instead listen to the defeatists, the collaborators, the men of little faith who brought France low even before its defeat by the Germans, we shall not deserve to see democracy preserved in our time.

In addition to political and "racial" deportees, the Germans forced about 800,000 French workers to

work for them in Germany. It is false to say that these workers went gladly or even willingly. A handful, who were down and out because of the paralysis of French industry resulting from the occupation, did take this opportunity to earn something for themselves and their families. But in order to obtain the number of workers they wanted, the Germans had to stage periodic raids and seize workers by force. Any notion that the work service was willingly undertaken is exploded by its very name, the *Service volontaire de travail obligatoire*. If one adds to the list 1,800,000 French war prisoners held by the Germans throughout the five years 1940-45, the Germans removed from France well over three million men and women, the majority of whom were in the active period of their lives when they could have contributed most to the political and economic rehabilitation of their country. Moreover, we must not forget that the French lost nearly one million men, women and children, both military and civilians, in the course of military operations and German executions on French soil. This loss, alone, approximates the total loss of war dead suffered by the United States, whose population is three times that of France.

4. *That "the French are not working hard enough, and that is why the country is still in such a parlous condition."*

American visitors in France, who live in specially arranged billets where they have heat, hot water, and good army rations palatably prepared by French cooks, have no idea whatsoever of the conditions under which the French have to proceed with the reconstruction of their devastated and impoverished country. The French have to go about their tasks insufficiently fed, in homes and offices that went completely unheated last winter, and with little or no hot water. Transportation difficulties are almost unbelievable. Hundreds of bridges were blown up during the post-D-Day period, either by the Germans or by the Allies. Railway lines and railway material were wrecked in the course of air raids. Ports were smashed, and locomotives, buses, trolley and freight cars were taken by the Germans out of France for use in military operations. In many areas France must start from scratch. To give only one example, workers in the shipyards of St. Nazaire, one of the ports flattened by Allied air raids, must live in the country because no housing is available in the port itself. They travel to work three hours in unheated trains, usually standing. When they arrive at the shipyards they are hungry and weary, and the procedure must be repeated when they leave at night. The situation could be improved if there were buses and gasoline, but neither of these luxuries is on hand. The miracle is that, under such primitive conditions, French work-

ers have the tenacity and will power to work at all. Actually, production in some enterprises has improved to a reasonable degree. For example, coal production for September and October averaged between 75 and 90 per cent of 1938.

5. *That "the French are intransigent in their foreign policy, especially with respect to Germany, and make things difficult for the Big Three."*

It is true that General de Gaulle, in his effort to re-establish France's position in world affairs, has tended to follow a policy of prestige which the country has neither the military nor industrial resources to sustain now or in the visible future. This tendency has complicated the task of Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, who has made every effort to conciliate foreign governments which have been offended again and again by the General's tactics. Fundamentally, however, all groups in France are united in their desire to assure the country's security in the future against the resurgence of Germany. Where they differ is on the method of achieving this end. M. Bidault and his party, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, favor a western association of nations led by Britain and France, and see no reason why Russia should regard such an association as a hostile bloc; while the Communists, supporting Russia's attitude, oppose any formal western grouping and lean heavily on the Franco-Russian alliance. All political groups, however, favor a strong international organization.

At the same time, the French want reinsurance against the possibility that the International Organ-

ization may not prove sufficiently effective to protect France, and therefore demand international control of the Ruhr with its rich resources of coal, and a sort of Franco-British-Dutch-Belgian condominium over the Rhineland but not annexation by France. Such an arrangement, they insist, would only give Western Europe the protection against Germany already given at Potsdam to Eastern Europe by the separation from the Reich of East Prussia. There are sound reasons for the doubts concerning French plans for the Rhineland raised by Britain and the United States, which fear further fragmentation of Germany. But the project for international control of the Ruhr deserves consideration by the Big Three.

The key question is whether the United States intends to stay in Germany as long as may prove necessary. If we do stay, then the French will not be so agonizingly preoccupied with the problem of security as they are today. If we leave, then it is difficult to see what right we have to prevent the French from assuring their security by whatever means seem to them most practicable. We are facing, under far more difficult conditions, exactly the same decision we faced in 1919: whether to guarantee the security of Europe by our active and continuous participation and thus allay France's fears, or withdraw and thus justify intransigence on the part of the French. With two wars on the continent in our lifetime, it would be the height of folly to belittle, as some Americans are doing, the nightmare fear of Germany which stalks not only France but all Europe.

VERA MICHELES DEAN

THE F.P.A. BOOKSHELF

What the South Americans Think of Us: A Symposium, by Carleton Beals, Bryce Oliver, Herschel Brickell, Samuel G. Inman. New York, Robert M. McBride, 1945. \$3.00

Four experts in the Latin American field have us see ourselves as our neighbors see us.

South America Uncensored, by Roland Hall Sharp. New York, Longmans, Green, 1945. \$3.00

The author, a newspaperman with many years of Latin American experience behind him, has really written two books in one. Part I is a strong indictment of the Argentine and Brazilian governments as fascist régimes; while Part II, "The Portrait of a Continent," is an illuminating description of the geographic and economic realities of the continent especially directed at young Americans in search of new frontiers.

Argentine Diary, by Ray Josephs. New York, Random House, 1944. \$3.00

An episodic account of the coming to power of the colonels' clique by a reporter who was from the start undeceived as to its true character.

The Pan American Yearbook 1945. New York, Pan American Associates, 1945. \$5.00

A compilation of basic facts about the Americas, including a "Who's Who of Inter-American Trade," arranged both alphabetically and by industry within each country.

The Argentine Republic, by Ysabel F. Rennie. New York, Macmillan, 1945. \$4.00

The best and most readable analysis of the Argentine crisis yet to appear, this history takes the reader from the founding of the Republic a century ago to the revolution of 1943, and contends that the democratic forces in Argentina gave the present nationalist government power by default.

Economic Problems of Latin America, edited by Seymour E. Harris. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1944. \$4.00

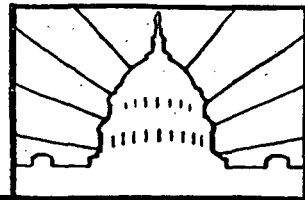
The student, rather than the general reader, will derive profit from this discussion of major economic issues in Latin America and the country-by-country survey which follows. The main thesis of the introduction is that these countries are the victims of external forces which they are now seeking to control, with what degree of success the individual country studies endeavor to show.

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Washington News Letter



CAN U.S. BASE EFFECTIVE POLICY ON WEALTH AND ATOMIC POWER?

The policy of the United States toward its two great wartime Allies, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, is shaped by American possession of two things which the rest of the world lacks and wants—a plentiful supply of dollars and the manufacturing secrets associated with atomic fission. The determination to trade these riches for foreign support of our views in world affairs became clear during the visit to Washington of Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee. The United States assured Mr. Attlee that we would lend dollars to his government provided Britain would seriously consider changing its international commercial policies and would accord us certain privileges in examining the financial position of the British Treasury. On November 15 Mr. Attlee and President Truman, with Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, announced a proposed agreement for the sharing of secrets on the peaceful use of atomic energy, provided that "other nations"—presumably the Soviet Union first of all—agree to abandon a policy of secrecy in scientific information and to grant the United Nations Organization the privilege of inspecting their industrial facilities.

QUID PRO QUO POLICY. The direct use of our wealth as a bargaining counter in foreign affairs marks a distinct change from wartime practice. During the period from March 1941 to August 1945, when we were sharing our material wealth with our Allies through lend-lease agreements, we asked nothing in exchange except a general commitment that lend-lease recipients would at some time in the post-war period jointly do what they could toward eliminating artificial barriers to the free movement of international commerce. The Roosevelt Administration rejected advice that it attach a specific *quid pro quo* to lend-lease, especially for lend-lease supplies sent to the Soviet Union, with the argument that the primary interest of the United States lay in military victory and that the use of lend-lease supplies by our Allies contributed to that victory. The end of the war and the termination of lend-lease agreements destroyed that argument.

The problem confronting the United States in the development of its *quid pro quo* policy is to determine how much to require of the potential beneficiaries of our wealth. The British negotiators for the loan agreement, Lord Keynes and the Earl of Halifax, for instance, have told their fellow-negotiators from the United States that the special privileges sought by this country are excessive. The

negotiators, accordingly, referred the whole question to the British government last week, and the attitude of one member of that government was revealed on November 16, when Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, told the Manchester Chamber of Commerce: "We will not become the economic fief of any other country." The United States loan proposal asks for two per cent interest each year that Britain has a favorable dollar balance in its trade, and would permit the United States to determine annually whether Britain has sufficient dollar balances to pay not only current interest but interest for any previous year in which payment was skipped.

Can such bargaining in international affairs be considered practical policy if our price is too high? The answer to this difficult question may be supplied by the nature of the Soviet response to the Truman-Attlee-King atomic energy proposals. While Russia has not made public its reaction, a sentence from the address previously made in Moscow on November 6 by Soviet Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov shows something of the Russian attitude: "The discovery of atomic energy should not encourage . . . a propensity to exploit the discovery in the play of forces in international policy."

ALTERING THE UNITED NATIONS? The agreement states that Mr. Truman, Mr. Attlee and Mr. King "are not convinced that the spreading of the specialized information regarding the practical application of atomic energy, before it is possible to devise effective, reciprocal and enforceable safeguards acceptable to all nations, would contribute to a constructive solution of the problem of the atomic bomb." Acceptance of that preliminary to the sharing could bring about a basic change in the nature of the U.N.O. Security Council, for the three men apparently consider the present authority of the Council to deal with aggression inadequate to "devise safeguards" against the threat to peace inherent in the existence of atomic weapons. The Administration is aware that other states might misread the position of the United States. To combat such construction, Secretary of State Byrnes, in an address in Charleston on November 16, said: "The suggestion that we are using the atomic bomb as a diplomatic or military threat against any nation is not only untrue in fact but is a wholly unwarranted reflection upon the American government and people."

BLAIR BOLLES